



## **Economic and Social Council**

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### **Commission on the Status of Women**

#### **Sixty-fifth session**

15–26 March 2021

**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and  
to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly  
entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and  
peace for the twenty-first century”**

### **Statement submitted by World Youth Alliance, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council\***

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## Statement

World Youth Alliance is a global coalition of young people dedicated to the promotion and protection of human dignity and the upholding of human rights. We have over 200,000 members in more than 130 countries. Our goal is to help establish solidarity between young people from all over the world who are able to articulate, defend, and live the dignity of the person in their lives and influence the communities and world in which they live. The World Youth Alliance welcomes the theme of the Commission and urges it to ground its efforts in the dignity of the person.

Human dignity is the fundamental, and inviolable principle of every human being, which is the only stable and lasting foundation for human rights and equality. It is the intrinsic worth of the human person that provides the basis on which to create and establish policies and laws that create conditions under which human beings can flourish. Without this foundation, human rights are at best illusory and are articulated and enforced on the basis of the arbitrary whims and caprices of those in power. Thus, for there to be effective progress in the realm of human rights, equality, and development, the efforts must be focused on placing utmost concern for upholding human dignity.

Humanity is its own greatest resource, but only when it involves all its members. Every person, woman or man, deserves a voice. Each woman has unique qualities and gifts which can only be fully appreciated, fostered and utilized where human dignity is respected. Authentic equality for women and girls must be grounded in the recognition of women's innate dignity as human persons; this is how we can empower women who will then transform their communities.

Women and girls have the same capacity as men and boys to learn, create, innovate and be agents of change in their societies. Education plays an essential role in the search for this goal. That is why equality must be guaranteed against access to quality education as an opportunity for social development and gender equality.

Access to quality education for women is an essential tool to guarantee equality and enable women and girls to fully participate in public life and play an equal role in societal decision-making. Increased access to education is critical to empower women and bring about greater recognition of their equality. States must invest in women's education in order to bring about women empowerment, as well as reduced family poverty, improved health, and reduced child mortality.

Education that fosters authentic personal development provides a solid foundation for building stable societies that guarantee human rights for all. Each new generation builds on the efforts of those who came before, allowing us as a society deepen our understanding of the intrinsic value of the human person and cultivate solidarity. Education in human dignity can promote respect for the equal value of women and their ability to contribute to development and society on an equal basis with men.

It is in this regard that World Youth Alliance can contribute through a curriculum that promotes respect, responsible behavior, and equality between women and men. The Human Dignity Curriculum (HDC) teaches children about human dignity: that every human being has it, and should therefore be respected. The program is culturally sensitive and encourages parental involvement. Students who understand human dignity are prepared to contribute to their communities and to treat others with respect in their families, peer groups, and communities, including in their personal relationships. It also promotes gender equality between men and women, teaching children that both are born equal in human dignity and human rights.

The Human Dignity Curriculum also has a sexuality education extension which teaches age-appropriate, biologically accurate information. It focuses on personal development and informed decisions related to students' sexuality based on an understanding of themselves, and with respect for their own human dignity and the dignity of others. This can help girls and boys form healthy, respectful relationships and resist peer pressure, thus decreasing social risk taking.

With regard to women's access to participation in all acts of public life, it must be noted that in many countries of the world, women are denied civil rights and opportunities to use their talents and reach their aspirations. This is incompatible with respect for their equal dignity, and with lasting development, which will be achieved only where women and men live and work together in mutual respect and solidarity.

When women exercise a key role in building, designing and protecting societies, their participation enriches and sustains the culture for themselves, their families, their communities, and for all generations to follow. In motherhood, which is a continual invitation to self-gift, woman develops society through the transmission of life. Women deserve the opportunity to develop and use their gifts in all areas of their lives.

World Youth Alliance notes with concern common rhetoric which treats the unique capacities of women as barriers to their participation in public life and decision-making. Not only do controversial policies such as abortion lack international consensus; their promotion as essential for women's empowerment undermines authentic equality by making conformity to male fertility and bodily norms the price for women's ability to have a role in society. They also undercut efforts to ensure that businesses and educational and public institutions support pregnant and parenting employees and students.

When we ensure that women and girls have the same opportunities and access as men and boys, in all spheres of life, we empower them to drive their own success and active contributors to development in their communities. By promoting policies which value all of women's and girls' gifts and unique capacities, we enable them to be drivers of development in their communities. That is why States must guarantee the implementation of public policies that aim at gender equality in all fields so that women and girls have the same opportunities as men.

World Youth Alliance joins the international community in its effort to achieve gender equality in which women have the same conditions in all fields. This requires mutual cooperation between people, society, governments and institutions in solidarity to promote conditions such as equality, respect and tolerance that lead to development. The World Youth Alliance believes that through these efforts we can build sustainable and resilient societies based on respect for human dignity. We call on Member States to promote policies grounded in human dignity to address inequality and ensure that women and girls are empowered participants in their communities and at all levels of public life.

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